

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 ISO-00 AS-01 IO-10 OMB-01 AID-05

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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8761

INF AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DACCA 5642

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, BG

SUBJ: BANGLADESH: LEADERSHIP TROUBLES

SUMMARY: THE OUSTER OF MOSHTAQUE AHMED AND THE EMER-
GENCE OF A MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN ACCOMPANIED
BY A "MUTINY" IN THE MILITARY WHICH HAS UNDERMINED THE
GOVERNMENT'S AUTHORITY. THE CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMIN-
ISTRATOR, PRESIDENT A.S.M. SAYEM, IS A DIFFERENT AND IN-
DECISIVE MAN WITHOUT PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATIVE OR POLITICAL
EXPERIENCE, AND HIS DEPUTY CMLA'S ARE HEAVILY PREOCCUPIED
WITH RESTORING DISCIPLINE TO THE MILITARY. THEY MUST
LOOK TO A CIVIL SERVICE WHICH HAS BEEN DEEPLY DEMORALIZED
AND REQUIRES GUIDEANCE AND DIRECTION. IN THIS SETTING,
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THE ODDS ON TIMELY EFFORTS TO REGAIN GOVERNMENTAL MOVE-

MENT SEEM SLIM, AND THE CONSTANT FEAR OF INDIAN INTER-
CENTION, WHEHTER OVERT OR COVERT, WORSENS MORALE.
BANGLADESH HAS ENTERED MORE TROUBLING TIMES THAN EVER.
END SUMMARY.

1. THE EVENTS WHICH BEGAN ON NOVEMBER 3 -- THE OUSTER
OF PRESIDENT KHONDAKAR MOSHTAQUE AHMED, THE BRIEF RE-
SURGENCE OF SHEIKH MUJIB'S FOLLOWERS, THE RISING OF THE
ENLISTED RANKS OF THE BANGLADESH ARMY AGAINST KHALIK
MOSHARRAF, AND THE "SEPOY MUTINY" -- HAVE BROUGHT A
HALT IN THE FORWARD MOTION WHICH HAD SO SLOWLY BEGUN
UNDER MOSHTAQUE AHMED'S AEGIS. WHEN, AND IF, THE
PRESENT MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION CAN RESTORE SOME
MEASURE OF VIGOR TO THE GOVERNANCE OF BANGLADESH IS
THE QUESTION WHICH NOW AWAITS AN ANSWER.

2. ONE RESULT OF THE EVENTS OF NOVEMBER 3 AND THEIR
AFTERMATH HAS BEEN THE REMOVAL OF THE ANOMALIES WHICH
MARKED MOSHTAQUE'S PERIOD IN POWER. BANGLADESH IS
NOW GOVERNED BY A MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION, EVEN
THOUGH THE CHIEF MARTIAL ADMINISTRATOR (CMLA)
PRESIDENT A.S.M. SAYEM, IS A CIVILIAN. THE CIVILIAN
CABINET HAS BEEN DISMISSED, AND THE PARLIAMENT DISSOLVED.
THUS, THE KEY TO THE GOVERNANCE OF BANGLADESH IS THE
MARTIAL LAW STRUCTURE, WHICH PRESENTLY CONSISTS SIMPLY OF THE CMLA
AND HIS THREE DEPUTIES, ARMY CHIEF GENERAL ZIAUR RAHMAN, NAVY
CHIEF COMMODORE MOSHARRAF HOSSAIN KHAN, AND AIR FORCE CHIEF AIR VICE
MARSHAL M.G. TAWAB. ZONAL ADMINISTRATORS HAVE YET TO BE
ANNOUNCED, ALTHOUGH WE UNDERSTAND THAT THIS ACTION LIES
JUST HEAD. BUT BANGALEES, ALWAYS DESIROUS OF FIRMNESS
AND PREDICTABILITY, ARE NERVOUS OVER THE DELAY. HOWEVER,
THE SLOWNESS IN MAKING APPOINTMENTS AT LOWER LEVELS IS
HARDLY SURPRISING, GIVEN THE THOROUGH INDISCIPLINE OF
THE MILITARY FORCES MANIFESTED OVER THE LAST TEN DAYS
AND THE RESULTING HEAVY DEMANDS ON MILITARY OFFICERS
AT ALL LEVELS.

3. FOR THE MOMENT, THEN, WE MUST LOOK PRIMARILY TO THE
CMLA AND HIS DEPUTIES. PRESIDENT SAYEM, CHIEF
JUSTICE OF BANGLADESH UNTIL NOVEMBER 6, IS SAID TO BE
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A MAN OF "JUDICIAL" TEMPERAMENT; PRESSED FOR A DEFINITION
BANGALEES FINALLY DESCRIBE SAYEM AS SLOW TO THE POINT
OF INDECISIVENESS IN RESOLVING ISSUES, AND TIMID TO
BOOT. HOWEVER, WHILE HE MAY NOT BE A DYNAMIC LEADER,
HIS COMMITMENT TO ELECTIONS BEFORE THE END OF FEBRUARY
1977 IS A COMMITMENT TO REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT AND
HIS APPOINTMENT OF FOUR PERMANENT JUDGES OF THE SUPREME
COURT -- SOMETHING NEVER DONE BY SHEIKH MUJIB OR

MOSHTAQUE AHMED -- SUGGESTS A COMMITMENT TO THE RULE OF LAW. BUT HOEVER GREAT THESE COMMITMENTS MAY BE, HE DOES NOTHING TO INSPIRE CONFIDENCE AMONG THE CIVIL SERVANTS, GIVEN HIS HESITATION AND DELIBERATION.

4. MOREOVER, THE PRESIDENT IS LARGELY OVERSHADOWED BY ONE OF HIS DEPUTIES, GENERAL ZIA. THE AIR AND NAVY CHIEFS SEEM LESS SIGNIFICANT. THEY COMMAND SMALL FORCES, AND WHILE RESPECTED, THEY ARE NOT SEEN AS DETERMINING ELEMENTS IN ANY CRISIS. ZIA SHOULD BE IN A POSITION TO DOMINATE THE SCENE, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF THE WAY IN WHICH HE WAS RESTORED TO COMMAND OF THE ARMY BY THE ARMED RISING OF ENLISTED MEN IN HIS SUPPORT ON NOVEMBER

7. BUT HIS FREEDOM TO DEAL WITH LARGE ISSUES HAS BEEN SERIOUSLY DILUTED BY THE "MUTINY" AGAINST THE OFFICERS CORPS. UNTIL THE DISCIPLINE OF THE ARMY IS FRIMLY RE-ESTABLISHED, THE ARMY IS AN UNRELIABLE INSTRUMENT. AS THE ADDRESSES BY ZIA AND HIS FELLOW DCML'S REVEAL, AND AS THE MOST RECENT AMENDMENT OF THE MARTIAL LAW REGULATIONS PROVIDING STIFF PENALTIES FOR ADVOCATING MUTINY AND INDISCIPLINE DEMONSTRATE (SEPTTEL), RE-ESTABLISHING AND CONSOLIDATING CONTROL OVER THE ARMY IS THE MOST IMMEDIATE PROBLEM THE PRESENT REGIME FACES.

5. RESTORATION OF DISCIPLINE IS THE SINE QUA NON FOR ALL ELSE, FOR THE "SEPOY MUTINY" HAS SERVED TO DEEPEN THE DEMORALIZATION OF THE MIDDLE CLASS FROM WHOSE RANKS COME BOTH THE MILITARY OFFICERS AND THE SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS. AND THE DAMAGE SUSTAINED BY THE CIVIL SERVICE IS AT LEAST AS SERIOUS AS THAT DONE THE MILITARY, ALTHOUGH IT HAS TAKEN FAR LESS DRAMATIC FORM. THE BUREAUCRACY HAS BEEN MANIPULATED, INTIMIDATED AND CORRUPTED SINCE THE LATE 1960'S, AND ITS ABUSE DURING THE PERIOD

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OF SHEIKH MUJIB'S RULE COMPLETED THE EROSION OF ITS OBJECTIVITY AND IMPARTIALITY. SUCH EFFORTS AS WERE MADE DURING MOSHTAQUE'S 80-DAY PRESIDENCY TO REVITALIZE THE CIVIL SERVICE ARE, AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT, HALTED AND THOSE WHO ADMINISTER BANGLADESH AT AND FROM THE NATIONAL LEVEL ARE IN DISARRAY. MOREOVER, AT THE LEVEL OF DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, THERE IS LITTLE IF ANY GUIDANCE BEING PROVIDED. TTHIS MUST AWAIT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION AT THE DIVISIONAL AND DISTRICT LEVELS THROUGH THE APPOINTMENT OF ZONAL MLA'S. FEW LOWER LEVEL ADMINISTRATORS HAVE THE DISCRETION, AND WHERE THEY DO, THE INITIATIVE, TO ACT IN THE ABSENCE OF ORDERS FROM OR CONSULTATION WITH DACCA, AND THUS MATTERS DRIFT.

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6. WITH THE MILITARY CHIEF PREOCCUPIED WITH RE-GAINING CONTROL OVER THE BASES OF POWER, THE PRESIDENT HESITANT TO MOVE WITH DISPATCH, AND THE BUREAUCRACY WAITING FOR GUIDANCE AND DIRECTION, SOME EFFORT MIGHT BE MADE BY POLITICAL LEADERS AND PARTIES TO INFLUENCE THE WAY IN WHICH BANGLADESH IS GOVERNED. THE BAN ON POLITICAL ACITVITY IS A FUNDAMENTAL IMPEDIMENT BUT MIGHT BE OVERCOME WERE LEADERS TO LIMIT THEIR ACTIONS TO THOSE INTENDED TO REINFORCE THE AUTHORITY OF THE PRESENT REGIME. WE HAVE HEARD THAT SOME AMONG THE MORE CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL LEADERS ARE MEETING TO DISCUSS THIS POSSIBILITY, MOVED DOUBTLESSLY BY PATRIOTIC MOTIVES BUT ALSO RECOGNIZING THAT SUCH ACTS OF SUPPORT WILL KEEP THEIR NAMES BEFORE THE PUBLIC. BUT THIS IS ABOUT ALL THEY CAN HOPE

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TO DO, NOT ONLY BECAUSE THEY CANNOT MOBILIZE THEIR PARTIES IN LIGHT OF THE EXISTING BAN BUT ALSO BECAUSE FEW CAN COMMAND ANY SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC SUPPORT. THE OLD AWAMI LEAGUE HAS BEEN BEHEADED, AND IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT MOSHTAQUE AHMED, WITH AN EYE TO CAPITALIZING ON THE POPULARITY HE GAINED AS PRESIDENT, IS REPORTELY TALKING WITH OTHER AWAMI LEAGUERS ABOUT THE WISDOM OF FORMING A NEW, CONSERVATIVE PARTY. THE OTHER CONSERVATIVE PARTIES -- THE TWO MUSLIM LEAGUES AND THE SEVERAL ISLAMIC PARTIES -- WERE CAST WHOLLY INTO THE BACKGROUND AFTER 1970, AND THEIR REVIVAL -- IN MORE SECULAR GARB, WE SUSPECT -- WILL TAKE TIME, AND SOME INDIVIDUALS FROM THESE COULD END UP IN A PARTY SUCH AS MOSHTAQUE EVISAGES. THUS, NONE ON THE RIGHT ARE IN ANY POSITION TO DO OTHER THAN MAKE PIOUS NOISES IN SUPPORT OF THE RESENT REGIME, NOTWITHSTANDING ITS EVIDENT WEAKNESSES.

7. THE LEFT IS ANOTHER MATTER. WHILE THE PRESENT REGIME MAY HAVE THE PASSIVE SUPPORT OF THOSE ON THE LEFT WHO FEAR INDIA AND THE SOVIET UNION, E.G., MAULANA BHASHANI'S NAP OR THE SAAOBADI DAL OF MOHAMMED TOAHA, OTHERS SEE IN THE "SEPOY MUTINY" AN OPPORTUNITY WHICH MUST BE SEIZED UPON. THE EFFORT OF THE JATIYO SAMAJTANTRIK DAL (JSD) TO MANIPULATE AND CAPITLAIZE ONTHE COLLAPSE OF DISCIPLINE IN THE ARMED FORCES IS A MOST DRAMATIC AND DANGEROUS DEVELOPMENT, AND UNDERLIES THE EMPHASIS BEING GIVEN THE RE-ESTABLISHING OF CONTROL OVER THE ENLISTED MEN. WHILE WE PRESENTLY ANTICIPATE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL SUCCEED IN THIS, THE ODDS ON ITS DOING SO ARE NOT GOOD ENOUGH TO BE COMFORTABLE, AND ANY DISRUPTIONS CAN ONLY DEFLECT THE GOVERNMENT FROM EFFORTS TO MOVE ON OTHER FRONTS.

8. THE SCOPE FOR MISADVENTURE IS HIGH. BANGALEES RECOGNIZE THE FRAGILITY OF THE SITUATION, AND ARE MORE THAN NORMALLY NERVOUS.UNSURE OF THEIR OWN CAPABILITY FOR SELF-GOVERNMENT IN MUCH BETTER TIMES, THEIR SELF-DOUBT IS NOW MAGNIFIED BY ALL THAT HAS TRANSPIRED SINCE AUGUST 15, AND PARTICULARLY BY THE UPHEAVALS WHICH BEGAN ON NOVEMBER 3. THEIR FEARS ARE ENHANCED BY EVER PRESENT DOUBTS WITH MEGHALAYA, THE REPORTS -- JUST

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IN -- THAT TIGER SIDDIQUI HAS ELUDED CAPTURE IN TANGAIL AFTER BEING SURROUNDED, THE CONSTANT STORIES THAT INDIAN

AGENTS AND PROVOCATEURS HAVE BEEN HIGHLY ACTIVE OVER THE PAST TWO WEEKS HAVE ALL DEEPENED THE MALAISE. THERE IS A STURDY BELIEF ON THE PART OF MANY THAT BANGLADESH WILL BE MADE TO PAY BY INDIA FOR THE OUSTER AND DEATH OF BOTH SHEIKH MUJIB AND KHALID MOSHARRAF, AND THAT THE INDIANS WILL TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF THE PRESENT WEAKNESS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE DEMORLAIZATION OF THE MILITARY AND CIVIL SERVICES. THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS LESS IMPORTANT THAN THE EXTENT OF THE FEAR.

9. MONTHS MAY BE REQUIRED BEFORE THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT CAN HOPE TO DEVELOP CONFIDENCE AND FORWARD MOTION. IN THAT TIME, THE MILITARY MUST DEMONSTRATE THAT IT HAS REGAINED CONTROL OF ITS MEN. AN IF THE BUREAUCRACY IS TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY, IT MUST HAVE STEADY AND COHERENT DIRECTION FROM THE CMLA AND THE DCMLA'S REGARDING OTHER, NON-MILITARY PROBLEMS AND POLICIES. PERHAPS OTHERS WILL BE RECRUITED TO AID THE PRESIDENT AND HIS DEPUTIES IN THE PROCESS, BUT WE HAVE HEARD NOTHING IN RECENT DAYS OF THE PROPOSAL FOR AN ADVISORY COUNCIL TO AID THE PRESIDENT. WHETHER THE IDEA IS PROVING HARD TO IMPLEMENT -- CERTAINLY, THE SELECTION OF EXPERIENCED AND YET UNTAINTED POLITICAL FIGURES COULD BE DIFFICULT -- OR HAS BEEN DROPPED IS AS YET UNKNOWN, BUT IT LEAVES THE PRESIDENT AND THE SERVICE CHIEFS TO CONFRONT THE WHOLE PANOPLY OF PROBLEMS WHICH BESET BANGLADESH. NO POST-LIBERATION GOVERNMENT HAS DEALT SUCCESSFULLY WITH THESE, THOUGH PAST REGIMES WERE BETTER MANNED, AT LEAST NUMERICALLY, AT THE TOP. THE PRESENT RULES NEED HELP. AND THEY NEED TO BE FREED FROM THE DISTRACTIONS CAUSED BY THE INDICIPLINE OF THE TROOPS AND FROM THE FEAR OF INDIAN INTERFERENCE. WE DO NOT SEE THESE NEEDS BEING MET SOON.

BOSTER

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